

Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

September 2016, Issue #4

Editor: Ann Vincent

Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

The remediation work at the park continues but we have been told that we will have the parking lot area opened for Pioneer Day. This means that Pioneer Day Oct. 2nd this year is on. That is great news since this is our biggest fund raiser. Again this year our event chair Ann Vincent is concentrating on kids activities and teaching the kids in a fun way the ways of the past. Ann and her committee have found new ways to connect the kids to history and the kids and their parents seem to really enjoy it.

We will not be having the Chili Cook-Off this year due to low participation in the last couple of years and early runout of Chili.

We hope that everyone is enjoying their summer as we are and looking forward to seeing everyone at our September General Meeting. If you have not been to Valley Relics this meeting will give you a glance of what you are missing.

Linda and André



Sending a text Pioneer Style, using a Telegraph and Morse Code.

Chatsworth Historical Society
Board of Directors 2016-2017

Co-Presidents	Linda & André van der Valk
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Upcoming Events

OPEN HOUSE

The Homestead Acre is open to the public the first Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 pm.

Tuesday, Sept 20 General Meeting – 7:00 pm



Tommy Gelinas, curator and founder of The Valley Relics Museum, will present a slideshow of some of the collections in the Museum. You won't want to miss this. Tommy enjoys sharing the stories behind many of the items he has collected, including the recently located Porter Ranch horse statues.

Sunday Oct. 2 – Pioneer Day 11-3 pm Our Annual Fundraiser...Take the Pioneer Challenge!

Tuesday, Oct. 18 General Meeting – 7:00 pm
Author Bronwyn Ralph will join us to discuss her book "Off the Beaten Path ", a guide to exploring Cultural Landmarks, Historic Monuments and other points of interest in the San Fernando Valley.

DOCENT DOINGS at the ACRE:

Our docents keep busy with projects throughout the year. We meet every Wednesday morning 9-noon.

OUT IN THE GARDEN: Annette and Karyne can be found dead-heading roses and hand watering plants as needed every Wednesday morning. If you need some outdoor fresh air therapy, come join them.

IN THE MUSEUM: Linda van der Valk is continuously working with the items donated to the museum by our members.

IN THE COTTAGE: An inventory project is underway to confirm and learn more about the items on display and their history so we can provide more information on our tours.

Over the last month, we successfully replaced the flooring in Minnie's 1950 kitchen and bathroom on the back porch of the cottage. The linoleum flooring had started lifting over time and needed to be replaced for safety. A new refrigerator was also added, replacing the previous one which was not frost free. Minnie's kitchen is used by the Historical Society for the Garden Festival Tea and Snack Bar preparation for events.

DOCENTS ARE NEEDED: Help guide guests through the museum and cottage. If you would like to learn the history of our community and help share it with others, then contact us for more information at chatsworthhistory@gmail.com.

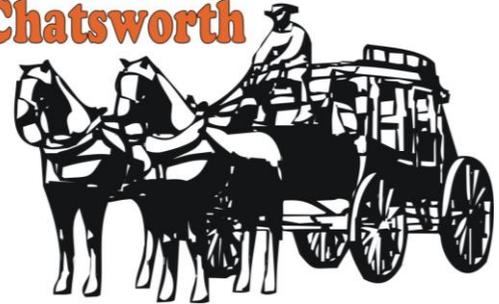
We look forward to our Sunday Open Houses with visits from members and individuals who show up with all sorts of Chatsworth memories. See the stories included in this newsletter. The story on page 7 was hand delivered to us just last month with a visit from Doug and Mary Mathias.

Chris Macur also visited and brought the Historical Society a collection of scanned photographs he had taken of trains passing through Chatsworth during the 1970's. There are over 50 photos in his collection.

PIONEER DAY – October 2

Come take the Pioneer Challenge!

Chatsworth



Pioneer Day

Once again our event will feature Old Time Games and Chores of Yore for children of all ages. Enjoy the activities. Try your hand at the crafts and challenges. Be sure to visit our Chatsworth Museum, take a tour of our Homestead Cottage and enjoy our beautiful gardens.

New crafts will be added along with the old and we look forward to the participation of everyone to help make this a success. Tell everyone you know and be sure to share our flyer that can be viewed and downloaded at:

<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com/Events.html>

RECENT PHOTO DONATIONS:

Thank you to Dorothy Liss, a descendant of Ann & Neils Johnson through the Pogue family. She



scanned and sent over 700 photos and documents for our Johnson family collection.

At left is a circa 1939 photo of Charles Walton Johnson (hugging the dog), son of Kelly and Katharine Johnson, and Bruce Snyder in the Santa Susana Creek, with

Stoney Point in the background. In 1968 this section of the creek was "improved" with a concrete channel.

**26th Annual
Chatsworth Historical Society**

Pioneer Day

Sunday, Oct. 2, 2016

11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Bring your children
& grandchildren**

**Take the
Pioneer
Challenge**

Old-time fun for everyone!

- Chores and Games of Yore
- Vendors
- Bake Sale
- Woodcarvers
- Blacksmith
- Leather Crafts
- Panning for Gold
- Spinning Wheel Demo
- Veteran Quilt Display
- Design a Quilt Craft
- Rock Chippers
- Bee Keeping
- Telegraph Station
- Butter Churning and more!



Chatsworth Museum Exhibits

**Featuring
Chatsworth Pioneer Families
and the
History of Rocketdyne**

Tour Minnie's 1911 Cottage

**Location: Homestead Acre,
Chatsworth Park South
(West end of Devonshire St.)
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA**

**Information: (818) 882-5614
chatsworthhistory@gmail.com
www.chatsworthhistory.com**

**Donation: Adults: \$5,
Children: \$1
(Free for kids under 5)**

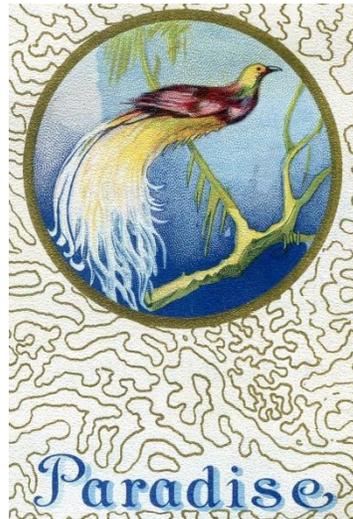
**Park your car at the Chatsworth Train Depot (10038 Old Depot Plaza Road)
and use our free shuttle service, every 15 minutes from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann Vincent

September 2016

Docia A. Conley Corporation was one of Chatsworth's successful icons from 1915 -1979, located at 21032 Devonshire. Known to most of us as The Paradise Gift Shop, it started as a Tea Room. It has been said that The Paradise Tea Room was always a favorite destination to "motor"



out to for a Sunday drive. The family owned business, started by Docia and George Conley, combined a tea room garden setting surrounded by a variety of plants, trees and exotic birds. The early beginnings of the Docia Conley story were captured in the following excerpt from a 1930 LA Times Article as follows:

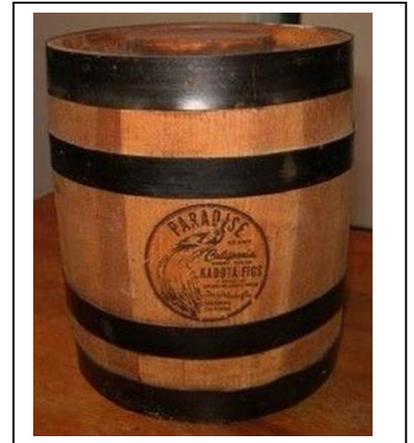
"In 1908 Mr. and Mrs. Conley (ages 34 and 32) were spending a summer on a ranch up in Bouquet Canyon. Mrs. Conley observed the qualities of fruits on the ranch as well as the gooseberries, manzanita berries and elderberries of the mountains that were going to waste. Now Mrs. Conley had been taught all her life that food should not be allowed to go to waste, so she began to preserve fruit. After filling all the available jars, there was still fruit going to waste, so she offered to preserve for the neighbors if they would furnish the jars and the sugar. At the end of the summer everyone was happy and the fruit had been saved.

The Conleys returned to Los Angeles with more fruit than they could possibly use and decided to sell some of the preserves. This led to requests for more and they returned the following summer to preserve fruits on the mountain ranch. In a short time they were supplying preserves to tourist hotels where something "different" was in demand. In the meantime Mrs. Conley was experimenting with the fruit to find the best methods to retain flavor, color

and freshness and acquiring knowledge about the fruits.

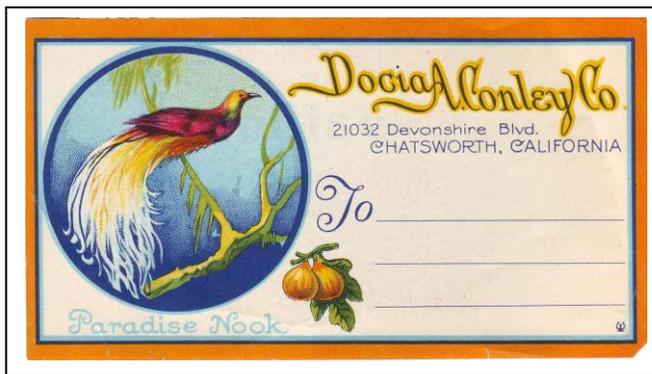
She became interested in the Kadota fig and learned that its starch content does not turn to sugar until the last days of ripening and that it must be taken for preserving purposes only when fully ripe. Another discovery of interest was that the fig gained measurably in weight during the last three days of ripening. In order to test her theories Mrs. Conley bought a two-acre demonstration plot from a subdivider in Chatsworth. This place had a four-room bungalow and a community hall, which later Mrs. Conley converted into a preserving plant. During the first year in the new plant Mrs. Conley put up over twenty tons of figs.

She next converted part of the plant into a demonstration room and next to this room she planned a garden. Here a winding path of red brick leads through the lawn of the garden past a clump of native willows; cottonwoods and sycamores that shade a tiny pool filled with water lilies. Along the garden edges there are plantings of roses and on one side a grape arbor



forms a background for a planting of scarlet sage. Fruit trees, including kumquats, apricots, avocados, tangerines and loquats, are placed in the background. At the back of the garden there is a large pen, well shaded, containing a number of golden pheasants. A cage of love birds, a parrot, a peacock and two roller canaries add color and interest to this charming little spot. There is also a little lath house filled with various flowering plants and shrubs in pots. These potted plants are moved to the garden when they are in blossom, to be replaced in turn by others. This makes possible a variety of color schemes for the garden throughout the year."

Their corporate seal shows that the business was officially incorporated March 20, 1915.

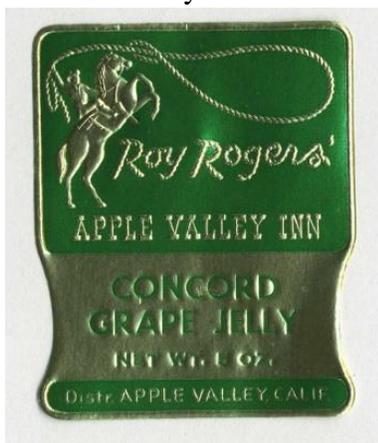


In 1928 The Van Nuys News advertises the Paradise Tea Room Dinner for \$1.00. This includes a menu of Paradise Salad, Stuffed Celery, Fried Chicken – Country Style, Fried New Zealand Rabbit, New Potatoes in Browned Parsley, Hot Biscuits, and Docia A. Conley’s Sweet Spiced Figs. Desserts include Fig Soufflé, cake and pies. Note: Special luncheons are available on week days for 35 cents.

In 1932, as Los Angeles hosted the Olympic Games, buses were provided by the hosting committee to transport visitors to the San Fernando Valley. The first stop was the San Fernando Mission, and following this, an early California luncheon was served on the patio of the Docia A. Conley Tearoom in Chatsworth. This was followed by a large reception and entertainment program at Rancho Sombra del Roble, estate of Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Orcutt near Chatsworth Lake.

The Conleys never had children. In 1941, Robert and Pheobe Chenard moved to Chatsworth. Robert had worked at a Fruit Preserving Plant in downtown Los Angeles. The Conleys considered the Chenards family, and the business was turned over to the Chenards in 1948. Docia passed away in 1949 and her husband George in 1952.

Robert did all the cooking, and Phoebe decorated, packaged and shipped. Phoebe continued to run the business by herself after



Robert’s death in 1952. In 1968, the Chatsworth Business and Professional Women’s Club (CBPWC) honored Phoebe Chenard. She had been the owner for over 20 years and they celebrated the 50th year of Docia A. Conley Co.

Phoebe’s son Leonard Chenard managed the company starting in 1964. The luncheons and teas were no longer served after Docia passed away, however the shop continued to ship its well known jellies, jams, figs and watermelon preserves all over the world. Community Service was always a large part of the Chenard family legacy. Phoebe and Leonard Chenard allowed the CBPWC to hold the monthly canteen days for the Community Cares project at their shop on Devonshire St. Beginning in 1967, packing day for the boxes to be sent to the local servicemen and women were held at the shop. Mrs. Chenard also helped pack items in the boxes, collected and donated items and generally supported the project diligently. Leonard also generously packed and shipped hundreds of books to be sent overseas by the Rotary Club.

In 1979 the Paradise Gift shop closed and the land was developed. Over the years, the Gift Shop provided a selection of items that could be shipped all over the world. Roy Rogers had his own selection of jellies and jams produced by the Docia A Conley brand. Interviews with long time Chatsworth residents include stories of seasonal jobs hauling large 50 lb. bags of sugar and stirring the large pots of jams and jellies. Lila Shepler mentioned that there were always jobs gift wrapping and packaging items to be shipped. There has been mention of the annual watermelon events, where



according to the Summers family you could eat all the watermelon you wanted, after the rinds were cut off to be pickled.



AQUA SIERRA SPORTSMANS CLUB – Fishing Lake



We would like to thank Mike Fender for helping us fill in the history of our Sports Center and the Fishing Lake.

Mike comments: “These photos and information were supplied to me by my father in law George Schneider. His in-laws were Albert and Alice Biddison who were the caretakers for the Club.”

The first photo was taken for the lake promotion. The man standing is Albert Biddison. The person in the tree is an unknown model.

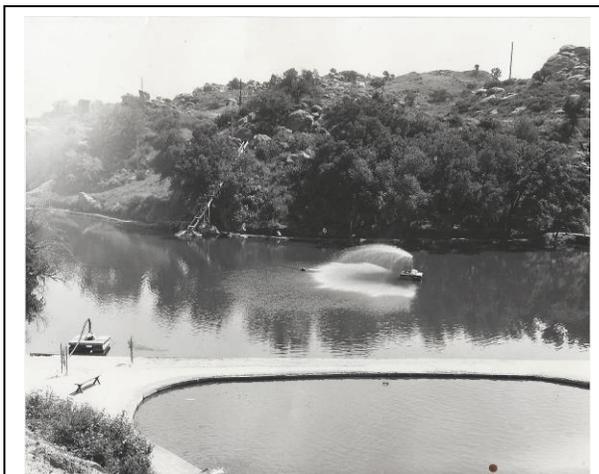
Besides being a fishing lake, the pond also served as the source for watering the

first 9 hole golf course. And there were aeration pumps with return water to the pond. “They were installed about 1961 after the first planted fish started to die off due to lack of oxygen in the pond.”



Linda Schneider about 10 yrs and her brother Bob about 8 yrs old. With one large catfish!

Mike included a couple photos to show the size of the fish being caught. The photo on the left shows his wife Linda Schneider about 10 yrs. and her brother Bob about 8 yrs. The photo below shows Greg Schneider about 12 yrs.



In 1963 photo showing aeration pumps installed in 1961 to keep the fish healthy.

Linda Schneider’s grandparents were the Biddisons. They lived in a midsize trailer at the lake adjacent to the Fishing Shed where fish were weighed, paid for, and cleaned and where you could also purchase snacks, sodas, and bait.



Greg Schneider about 12 years old.

Albert helped build the lake and the golf course. He managed the lake, golf course, and the Gun Club with his wife Alice. The gates for the facilities located at the end of Devonshire were opened and closed everyday by them. Basically they worked seven days a week.

Photos and information provided by Mike and Linda Fender.

CHATSWORTH MEMORIES from the Bustamante - Rubio family



On June 24, we were delighted to have Mary Bustamante Rubio, age 97 as a guest at the Acre. She was accompanied by her son Robert Rubio Jr. and granddaughter Diane Rubio. Mary was born in 1919 in Texas, however her family relocated to Chatsworth shortly after that.

The family moved to Chatsworth to join her Uncle Juan and Aunt Anna who lived on a farm on Lassen Street. Mary's father Melesio and mother who went by the name Lucas (Lucrecia) farmed 30 acres of watermelon in the early 20's there on Lassen. Their farm was on the north side of Lassen across from the Chatsworth Inn (today's Staybridge Suites), where the owners of the Inn had exotic birds that she remembers hearing as a child. Mary recalls the Chatsworth Park Elementary school while it was the two story building. All of her older siblings attended Chatsworth Park Elementary School and she would have started school there also.

Mary remembers the Lombardi family and the Ramos family. She recalls trips to Canoga Park to go shopping riding in a horse drawn buggy. She also remembers the Chatsworth Reservoir when it had water in it.

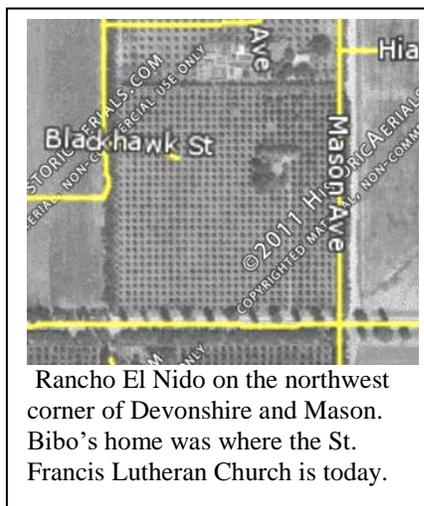
In 1925 her family moved to Canoga Park on Alabama where she attended Eaton Ave. Elementary School. Her mother lived in that house until she passed away at the age of 103, in 1983.

Mary met her husband Robert Rubio in 1937 and they had two sons, Robert Jr. and Adolph. Dianne, daughter of Robert Rubio Jr, made arrangements for a private tour of our Homestead Acre to bring her grandmother and visit her Chatsworth roots.

RESEARCH CHALLENGE 1940's CHATSWORTH SONG by Irving Bibo

Many of us remember Chatsworth's Centennial Song written in 1988 by Lester "Smitty" Smith Jr. and arranged by Walter Clyde Orange of the Commodores. That song was performed in honor of Chatsworth's Centennial. If you haven't heard it, Ray made a music video of it, available at www.chatsworthhistory.com, Videos. HOWEVER, Keith Hart of Facebook site WSFVT&N recently found a newspaper clipping referencing an earlier Chatsworth Song.

Irving Bibo, a famous song writer of Broadway and University songs, was a member of the Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce for several years in the 1940's. He wrote this first Chatsworth Song to promote our town. We believe the name of the song is "Good Old Chatsworth."



Rancho El Nido on the northwest corner of Devonshire and Mason. Bibo's home was where the St. Francis Lutheran Church is today.

Irving resided in Chatsworth in the 1940's and 50's and owned a 10 Acre ranch on the NW corner of Mason and Devonshire named Rancho El Nido (The Nest). He was an active supporter of the community and he used his show

business connections to host All-Star Show Fundraisers for both the Boys Town in 1947 and for the Boy Scout Troop 26 in 1953.

We can't find the song, but we can find a few references to it in the Van Nuys News.

Mrs. Ruby Campbell performed the song in 1968. Then later in 1973 at Chatsworth's 85th birthday celebration, there was a recitation of the words to Irving Bibo's Chatsworth song by the Kiwassee Wa Kani Campfire girls.

Virginia Watson recalls the Womens Club singing the song at meetings prior to 1988.

So think back? Any chance you still have a copy of the words in your scrapbook or know someone who might?

MORE CHATSWORTH MEMORIES....

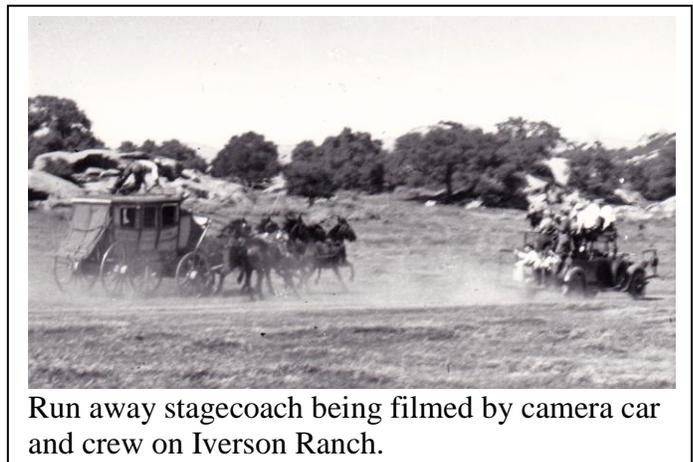
RECOLLECTIONS OF A STUDIO SON, by Doug Mathias

I guess you could say, “I grew up on a motion picture studio lot.” My Dad was Key Grip at REPUBLIC PICTURES and would often take me to work with him.

I remember a special occasion when he brought me on the back lot set of “RED RYDER”, who he knew was my favorite cowboy hero. It was 1944 and I was seven years old and familiar with many of the characters on the show. The set was a town square and Dad told me to sit right here. The next thing I knew someone said “here put on this jacket and sit on this park bench”. Dad was off talking to someone and I hear the words: “quiet on the set, rolling”. There were lots of people milling around and I was kind of uneasy as I was waiting for someone to tell me what to do next. Then I heard the words, “cut”, there was more commotion and Dad suddenly showed up with Buckskin Blodgett (Emmett Lynn) and introduced me to this funny actor who was still in character. My seven year old brain was reeling.

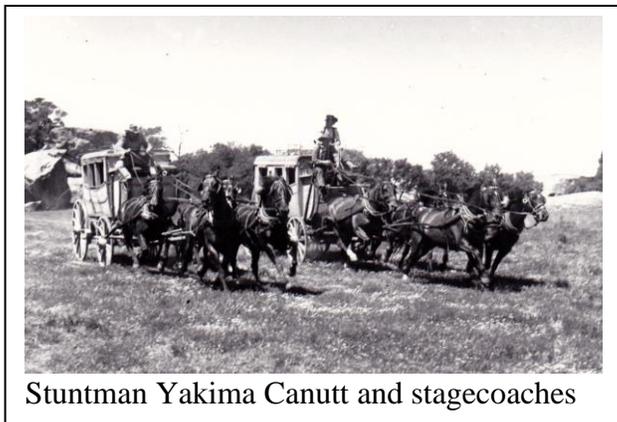
It was lunch time and we were in the studio commissary with Dad’s friend and our neighbor, Roy Wade, who was an Assistant Director. After lunch we were off to another back lot set called “the cave” where Red Ryder, (Wild Bill Elliott) and Little Beaver, (Bobby Blake) were tracking down a bad guy in a mine. Dad said to be quiet and told me they would be shooting guns in the mine. Sure enough there was shooting and I froze in my tracks waiting for Dad to say I could talk. I heard someone say, “OK Bobby, go back to school”, and Little Beaver walked right on past me. Looking back on the events of that day, I don’t remember them ever shooting a scene twice. They just moved on to the next scene.

I recall another occasion where Dad took me on location with him to Iverson Movie Ranch in the rugged mountains above Chatsworth where there was a frontier town set and a ranch set amid the craggy rocks. There, at a distance, I watched a stagecoach scene with the run-away horses pulling the stage at high speed. A ‘camera car’ with cameras and a crew were driving alongside the stagecoach, also at high speed. Although I could not see what was happening from where I was standing, I later found out that stuntman Yakima Canutt had jumped from the stagecoach onto the



Run away stagecoach being filmed by camera car and crew on Iverson Ranch.

traveling team of horses slowing the team down to a stop. A stunt he had done many times. I was very excited as I watched them shooting the close-ups of the same stunt this time using the real actor to bring the team to a stop.



Stuntman Yakima Canutt and stagecoaches

Dad introduced me to Yakima who I had just watched do this very dangerous stunt. Yakima said to me. “It’s a pleasure to finally meet ‘little Nels’” as he said I was called by the crew. The filming continued on around the stagecoach with the rest of the cast. Later that day we moved to the town set and Dad told me to look for fired 5-in-1 black cartridges that were all over the ground which kept me busy for hours. That day seemed to fly by and before I knew it we were on the studio bus on our way home.

Although Dad took me to Iverson’s Ranch several times after that, I still remember the excitement of watching the thundering horses pulling the stagecoach, all the dust, and Yakima leaping between the horses pulling the team to a stop.

Chatsworth Historical Society

Virginia Watson Museum & Gift Shop

The following items are available for sale during Open Houses on the first Sunday of the month. To arrange to purchase items at other times, email chatsworthhistory@gmail.com to make arrangements for payment and shipping, if necessary.

CHATSWORTH HISTORY by Virginia Watson	\$10.00
CHATSWORTH PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL The First 100 Years by Ioline Cleveland	\$10.00
WINDOW INTO THE PAST by William Schepler	\$10.00
QUIET ON THE SET by Robert Sherman	\$25.00
OUR PIONEER MOTHER As told to Lenora Johnson MacDonald	\$10.00

Can we Email our newsletter to you?

In an effort to reduce costs, save paper, and provide you with a color copy, we now email newsletters to those of you that have given us an email address. However, we also continue to send you a snail-mail copy until you advise us not to. Please email us at chatsworthhistory@gmail.com to stop future newsletter mailings and save us some money. And also please email us to provide your email address. Thanks!

Wondering if your Dues are Due?

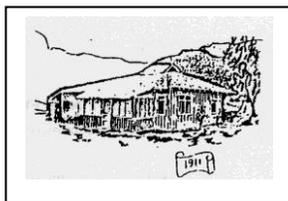
For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you by email when your dues are due.

For snail mail, if you have an asterisk at the end of your name on the mailing label, your dues are due.

Please use the form below to renew your Membership. And if your neighbor is not a member yet, pass this newsletter on to them and invite them to join.

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership Form



Your membership helps support our Homestead Acre and the educational and historical programs we provide for our community. Members receive our quarterly newsletters, and receive invitation reminders regarding our monthly programs and annual events – Rose Pruning, the Garden Festival, Membership Roundup, and Pioneer Day. Please mail this form with your annual membership dues and/or contribution made payable to:

Chatsworth Historical Society, 10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311
chatsworthhistory@gmail.com 818-882-5614 www.historicalsocieties.net

Yearly: New Member Renewal
Life Membership: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Organization \$20.00
 \$ 125.00

NAME _____ Phone: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ Email: _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP: _____

Special Interest / Expertise: _____

Reminder: If you got this mailed to you, an asterisk on your label means your dues are due!